

100446(3) Thetford

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

For the year ended December 31st, 1923.

TO THE THETFORD URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year ending 1923 as follows :—

1. GENERAL STATISTICS.

The area of the District is 7,096 acres. It is partly rural and partly urban. The inhabitants are engaged in Agriculture and Estate Work in the Rural area, and in Engineering, Malting, Brewing, Paper Pulp Making and Working and General Trading in the Urban area.

The estimated population is 4,715. The number of houses is approximately 1,260 and the rateable value is £17,531.

The sum represented by a penny rate is about £72.

2. VITAL STATISTICS.

BIRTH RATE. 78 births were registered during the year giving a birth rate of 16.54 per 1,000. The rate for England and Wales is for the same period, 19.7 per 1,000.

Of the births registered 32 were boys and 46 girls. There were 3 illegitimate births.

DEATH RATE. 51 deaths were registered giving a death rate of 10.81 per 1,000. The rate for England and Wales is 11.6 per 1,000.

Of the deaths registered 23 were in people over 70 years of age, 8 in persons over 80 and 1 in a person who had exceeded 100 years.

The main causes of death were as follows :—

Cancer 6, heart disease 9, cerebral hæmorrhage 5, respiratory diseases 9. There were 3 cases of death from suicide. There were no deaths from the ordinary infectious diseases. There was one death from tuberculosis. There was no death in consequence of child-birth. 5 deaths were recorded in children under 1 year, giving an infantile death rate of 64.5 per 1,000 births, against a rate for England and Wales of 69.

3. NOTIFIABLE DISEASES.

9 cases of scarlet fever were notified during the year. All these cases occurred sporadically throughout the year and no connection could be traced between them, except in the case of 2 children being infected in the same house. The disease was of a very mild type and there were no deaths.

5 cases of diphtheria were notified 3 of which occurred in the workhouse and were traced to a boy who was on holiday from the East Anglian Institute for the Blind, and was found to be carrying the disease in his nose, though not ill himself. One of the other 2 cases contracted the disease outside the area and developed it here.

7 cases of tuberculosis were notified. The disease affected the lungs in 3 cases, the abdomen in 2 and the bladder and pleura one each.

The usual routine methods were carried out in dealing with these cases.

There was a severe outbreak of measles in the first quarter of the year necessitating the closure of the Council Schools.

The disease was of a severe type.

4. CAUSES OF SICKNESS.

No special causes of sickness were noticed during the year.

5. NURSING ARRANGEMENTS. HOSPITAL & OTHER INSTITUTIONS AVAILABLE IN THE DISTRICT.

1. PROFESSIONAL NURSING IN THE HOME. The Town is served by a District Nurse who works under a Committee of Ladies and is paid by subscriptions from patients and contributions from persons in the town. The annual subscription is 4/- and necessitous cases are treated free of charge. She does much good work in alleviating distress and suffering in the Town.

Nurse Thurtle lives at Hillside, White Hart Street, and the Secretarial duties are carried out by Mrs. Cronshey, The Close, who will give all information necessary.

2. MIDWIVES. There are two practising midwives in the town. They are not employed or subsidised by the Local Authority.

3. HOSPITALS.

1. COTTAGE HOSPITAL. This Hospital contains seven beds and a cot and is open to patients in the Town and some Villages in the District. It is supported by voluntary contributions, and a weekly fee is charged to patients who are not contributors, except in cases of special hardship.

2. POOR LAW INFIRMARY which accommodates Poor Law patients.

I wish again to refer to the want of accommodation for small pox cases should such occur. At present no provision is made for this disease, and should a case occur there would be bound to be delay and danger in dealing with it. I understand that steps are being taken regarding this difficulty and would advise that they be hurried on as much as possible.

During the year consultations have taken place regarding the provision of a General Infectious Diseases Hospital, but nothing definite has yet been agreed on. I would strongly support such an institution as likely to limit the spread of disease, although in Thetford we have been remarkably successful in this matter by the routine precautions which are taken, details of which I have given in full this year under Sanitary Administration, par. 4. At the same time the possibility of a bad outbreak must not be overlooked and it is then that hospital accommodation would help to limit the spread of the disease.

4. CLINICS AND TREATMENT CENTRES.

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE CENTRE. The work in this movement has been steadily continued throughout the year, except in January, February and part of March during the epidemic of measles, when the Centre was closed on account of the risk of spreading the disease.

The Staff remains the same as last year and the Town is much indebted to these Ladies for the hard work they have put into the movement. I would like it to be more generally known that Mrs. Carter, 66, Bury Road, is in charge of the baby garment depôt, where these garments may be obtained at cost price and advice is given in regard to making them up. Patterns, etc., are also supplied. This branch of the work has been successful in having the children properly clothed.

Free milk has been provided in necessitous cases and much good has resulted from it. The amount which it was necessary to supply this year was much less than last year.

The Ante-Natal Clinic has done much more extended work this year and has been well taken advantage of. 22 mothers have been visited and 59 visits paid. I would like to impress the importance of this part of the work as by this means much suffering and risk may be avoided. Nurse Sowels is in charge of this part of the work, and anyone wishing advice can see her at No. 2, Old Market Street.

The Centre Balance Sheet is as follows:—

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
In hand (Jan. 1st, 1923)	2	2	0	Welfare Books ... ..	...	15	0
Books sold ... ..	...	9	0	Cod liver oil, etc. ... ..	...	12	3
Mothers' Contributions	1	14	6	Printing ... ..	...	7	6
				Loans for dental treatment ... ..	...	2	0
				Cash in hand ... ..	...	10	9
	£4	5	6		£4	5	6

The Mothers' contributions are voluntary and made when the Centre is open.

The Thrift Club is open every Tuesday from 12-1 o'clock at the Town Hall. It is run in connection with Miss Fison's Penny Club. So far it has not been fully taken advantage of, and I would like its existence and advantages to be more widely known.

The Secretary's report is as follows :—

Attendances, mothers	...	...	...	...	378
„ children	...	...	..	...	400
Home visits recorded	..	...	...	...	1384
Average number per meeting	...	...	...	...	18
Consultations	...	...	...	...	22
Free milk provided	...	...	...	...	145 gallons 1 pint

The number of attendances are down from last year, principally owing to the closing of the Centre on account of the outbreak of measles.

5. HOSPITALS PROVIDED AND SUBSIDISED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY. Nil.

6. PROVISION FOR UNMARRIED MOTHERS, ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN AND HOMELESS CHILDREN. Nil, except Poor Law Institutions.

7. AMBULANCE FACILITIES. INFECTIOUS CASES. There is a horse-drawn ambulance for small-pox cases, otherwise nil.

NON-INFECTIOUS CASES. Nil at present. The ambulance previously in use is now out of repair and a new one has not yet been provided.

6. LABORATORY WORK.

All Laboratory work is now carried out by the Norfolk County Laboratory at Norwich, and has proved satisfactory. The Local Authority pays for the examination in necessitous cases.

Samples of the town water have been submitted for analysis as usual and the report is again very satisfactory.

The opinion of the analysts is as follows :—

“The water is of exceptional organic purity, free from all trace of pollution, and of excellent quality for drinking and domestic purposes.”

“This water is of excellent bacteriological purity.”

7. SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

1. No new drainage work has been carried out. The system of conservancy has been carried out as before and is working smoothly. Two privy vaults have been converted to water closets and 5 privy vaults have been converted to pail closets.

362 cesspools have been emptied, 420 pails are emptied weekly. House refuse has been dealt with as in former years.

2. Inspections under Article XX. of the Sanitary Officers (outside London) Order, 1910, have been carried out regularly.

Bakehouses have been inspected and found satisfactory.

3. There are 5 registered slaughterhouses in the town. These have been inspected and the regulations have been complied with.

4. Methods of dealing with outbreaks of infectious diseases.

The occurrence of a case of infectious disease is notified by the doctor in attendance to the Medical Officer of Health, who visits the house usually accompanied by the Sanitary Inspector. Enquiries are then made regarding the possible source of infection and advice given as to the easiest method of isolating the case and preventing further spread of the disease. Disinfectants are provided free of cost and renewed as required by the Sanitary Inspector, who visits the house periodically to see that the instructions are being carried out. The Headmaster of the school which the child is attending is notified to exclude from the school any other children from the same house. When the case has recovered notice is sent to the Sanitary Inspector, who visits the house and carries out disinfection of the room or rooms by means of formalin vapour. Should the case require it the bedding and bolster are destroyed by him by fire and compensation is paid to the owner. Disinfectants are provided for the disinfection of blankets, sheets, etc. Information is then sent to the Headmaster of the school intimating that he may again admit the children from the house.

The Local Authority pays in necessitous cases for the examinations of swabs in suspected diphtheria, for the examination of the blood in suspected typhoid, and for the examination of sputum in suspected pulmonary tuberculosis.

The Authority also pays the doctor in charge of the case 5/- for each prophylactic inoculation against diphtheria in necessitous cases where such is considered necessary by the Medical Officer of Health.

The Council supplies diphtheria antitoxin free in necessitous cases.

In cases of suspected cerebro-spinal meningitis the Council has an agreement with Dr. Claridge, Pathologist of Norwich, by which he visits and makes the necessary bacteriological examinations.

5. Dairies and cowsheds have been inspected and found satisfactory. The regulations have been complied with. Your Sanitary Inspector acting as sub-inspector under the Norfolk County Council has taken 15 samples of milk. 14 of these were up to standard, one was deficient in milk fat and a caution was administered. 56 samples were tested by lactometer and proved satisfactory. The samples taken were on the whole good.

6. Under the Public Health Act, meat exposed for sale has been inspected, but no action was necessary. No seizures of tuberculous meat have been made.

7. Your Sanitary Inspector acting as Inspector of Nuisances made 211 inspections. 14 nuisances were discovered and 14 notices served and 1 statutory notice. 13 were complied with leaving 1 in hand at the end of the year.

8. PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF.

Medical Officer of Health. Part time D.P.H. Sanitary Inspector, part time Royal Sanitary Inspector. The latter also acts as Borough Surveyor.

9. HOUSING.

The work under this heading has been mainly routine and administrative, owing to the continuance of shortage of houses of low-rental. The well-paid Artisan and the Clerk is now fully provided for, but the same conditions as before exist regarding the provision of good houses for the man earning 30/- a week and under. Periodic inspections of the houses have been made and defects have been remedied as far as possible, but in many cases actual closure of the house and reconstruction is the only thing that can make them really fit for habitation, but this cannot be done owing to there being no house to which the inmates can go. Use as far as possible is being made of the Corporation Dwellings to carry out this work but it is seldom a house is available there.

No houses have been erected during the year and no closing orders have been made.

119 houses have been inspected in detail. 107 of these proved satisfactory, 11 were defective and 1 totally unfit for human habitation. 11 notices were served, 9 were complied with, leaving 2 outstanding at the end of the year. The 4 notices outstanding at the end of 1922 have been complied with.

No voluntary closures were made during the year. One demolition order made has been complied with. No houses were closed under Section 17 of the Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act, 1909.

I have to record my high appreciation of the work done by your Sanitary Inspector and my thanks for his assistance to me.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,



Medical Officer of Health.

*Thetford,
1st May, 1924.*